



**IN TRANSFORMATION
INITIATIVE**

Strengthening Local Capacity in Supporting Lesotho's Peace Process



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The political crisis in Lesotho, heightened by failed coalition governments, attempted coups and the inevitable disillusionment of the Basotho people, culminated in the national reform process launched in 2018. These challenges raised international interest in Lesotho and prompted the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to appoint South African President Cyril Ramaphosa as Special Envoy to Lesotho in 2014. This despite the reluctance of many Basotho to engage with external actors in dealing with the political crisis in the country.

In Transformation Initiative's (ITI) involvement in Lesotho was aimed at supporting the national dialogue process in order to bring about political stability. ITI's involvement took place through a strategic partnership with a local institution, the Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL). The CCL holds an important position in Basotho society as a local mediator with moral authority and extensive convening powers. It is also a trusted local partner that can work with external organisations.

ITI's actions in Lesotho were mainly aimed at strengthening local-level capacity in support of peace and stability; notably to support the SADC-facilitated national reform process. Of particular interest to ITI was the issue of constitutional, security sector and parliamentary reforms – areas in which it has specialist skills and experience. When the national reform process in Lesotho was launched in 2018, ITI sought to support the process by providing institutional support to a credible local partner, the CCL.

The CCL, whose mission is to maintain oversight over peace and stability in the country, came highly recommended by the SADC Envoy to Lesotho, Justice Dikgang Moseneke.¹ However, it was noted that the CCL would need greater capacity if it were to engage in the reform process at the level desired. Therefore, ITI's intervention was structured around strengthening the CCL's Heads of Churches (HOCs) and members of the Secretariat in terms of dialogue facilitation and mediation skills. It also hoped to deepen understanding of the role of the CCL in general, by reviewing and developing its strategic plan for the coming five years.

ITI exposed the CCL to the South African experience, where the South African Council of Churches (SACC) played a critical role in the transition process by mobilising communities. The SACC diffused tensions, and so averted civil war and steered the country towards a peaceful transition.

ITI facilitated several other strategy and advisory engagements to support and enhance the CCL's capacity to deliver on its mission.

While ITI's involvement in Lesotho is still in its infancy, the improvement in the HOCs' confidence in their role as the country's moral authority is notable.



Their convening power has been strengthened and they are increasingly engaging with various democratic institutions. The role of the HOCs in the national reform process is critical, as it renders the process legitimate and boosts confidence that the recurring political challenges can give way to lasting peace.

Although ITI has thus far been involved in Lesotho for little over a year (July 2019 to April 2020), there are already some lessons that can be gleaned from the project documentation and interviews with members of ITI, the CCL Secretariat, HOCs and one of the ITI's facilitators involved in dialogue and mediation training activities with the CCL.

- National government institutions should have the necessary capacity and political will to effectively spearhead inclusive national processes. A lack of capacity, coupled with limited willingness, undermines peace processes.
- National reforms should be built on an inclusive strategy that enables all stakeholders – including government, civil society, the Church and citizen groups – to participate or be represented in the dialogues. This will avoid disenfranchising any groups and will create an environment that encourages stakeholders to cooperate when implementing reform programmes.
- When intervening in conflict situations it is critical that external agencies partner with credible and trusted local institutions that have enough political leverage to facilitate and enable implementation of democratic processes in seeking sustainable solutions. In Lesotho, ITI identified and partnered with the CCL, a religious organisation that has stood the test of time and remains trusted and influential in the country.
- Investing in local-level institutions and building their capacity engenders a sense of national ownership in peace processes. It ensures the institutionalisation of local-level capacity to drive a peace process, ultimately leading to a sustainable peace. This is particularly important in contexts where external intervention is resisted. Partnering with the CCL and strengthening the capacity of the HOCs has thus far resulted in their embracing their important role in the country and being more amenable, confident and proactive in participating and facilitating dialogues on various issues.
- For national peace processes to become self-sustainable, resilient national institutions need to emerge from within, as these are rooted and informed in the local culture, history and socio-economic context. While international peacebuilders can assist this process, their interventions have to be measured and empowering. This will ensure that they do not undermine local capacities or thwart the self-organising processes necessary to generate and sustain the resilience of local institutions.



It is critical that external agencies partner with credible and trusted local institutions

INTRODUCTION

This case study forms part of a series aimed at capturing lessons learnt from ITI's approach and the application of the South African transition model in various country initiatives. ITI's model in peacemaking initiatives is focused on reflecting on and sharing the principles of the South African political transition. This gives countries the opportunity to learn from the South African experience and so support or strengthen their own efforts to establish peaceful political transitions or conflict settlements.

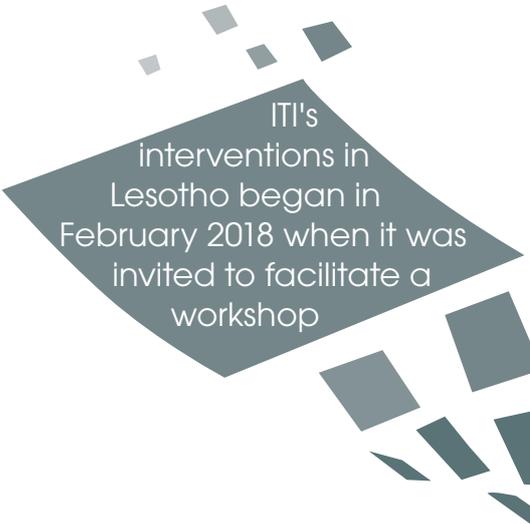
The background to this case study is based on ITI's project documentation, including research reports, annual grant reports and feedback summary reports after visits to the country. Further details and first-hand accounts of the project were obtained via interviews with ITI directors.

ITI's interventions in Lesotho began in February 2018 when its staff was invited to facilitate a training workshop organised by the CCL on coalition management. This workshop was attended by members of all four coalition partners in the then government. The partnership with the CCL was formalised in July 2019 following the institution of the SADC-facilitated national reform process in November 2018.

The national reform agenda is premised on the recurrent political instability, security uncertainties and failed reform attempts. It focuses on the functioning of the political system, administrative and legislative mechanisms, and constitutional arrangements, and envisaged reforms in the security, justice and public sectors, as well as parliamentary and constitutional reforms. The key objective of the reforms is to restore political stability and strengthen accountability mechanisms in the functioning of government.

While ITI's ultimate aim was to support the reform process, it decided to do this by supporting a local organisation, the CCL. ITI's engagement with the CCL focused on strengthening the capacity of the Church to play an effective oversight role to restore and maintain national peace and stability. The partnership agreement with the CCL initially ran until April 2020, with the intention being to renew the arrangement if the national reform agenda unravelled. During this period ITI hosted a delegation of six HOCs (out of a total of seven) on a learning visit in South Africa. It also engaged in follow-up dialogues with the HOCs and undertook six visits to Lesotho between August 2019 and March 2020. Following the national lockdowns in South Africa and Lesotho in March 2020, ITI conducted two online advisory meetings with the HOCs in March and April 2020.

The analysis in this case study is based on project reports and interviews with Patience Hwenha,² Masechaba Thorela,³ Liphapang Monesa,⁴ the HOCs led by Archbishop Tlali Lerotholi,⁵ and Caesar Molebatsi.⁶



ITI's interventions in Lesotho began in February 2018 when it was invited to facilitate a workshop

BACKGROUND CONTEXT IN LESOTHO

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with the king as head of state, governed by a 33-member Senate and a 120-member National Assembly. The country has had a long history of political instability and insecurity. During the 53 years that Lesotho has been independent, it has suffered various episodes of volatility and insecurity.⁷ Since the country gained independence in 1966, coups, attempted coups, assassinations, electoral disputes and political instability have characterised its political environment.

More recently, the three coalition governments formed between 2012 and 2020 have all but collapsed before their five-year terms expired. During the ITI's involvement in Lesotho, the then prime minister, who was in his third year in office, was forced to retire largely as a result of deep intra-party conflict. This phenomenon is characteristic of party politics in Lesotho. The proliferation of political parties and the emergence of coalition governments since 2012 in particular have thrown the country into crisis.

In Lesotho political parties stand accused of having captured the country, including its institutions, and holding it to ransom by manipulating and ensuring the failure of coalition governments. The recurrent trend of failed coalition governments is exacerbated by the lack of legal instruments, practices and conventions that would enable effective coalition management and transition of power. This is because coalition governments are a new phenomenon in Lesotho and the existing electoral, political and legal framework failed to anticipate this development. In addition, the bar for registering and structuring the conduct of political parties has been set so low that they have little credibility.

Political parties have also shown no inclination to follow democratic processes to restore peace and stability in the country. Instead, politicians have used their positions and political parties to facilitate corruption and syphon off national resources. This has created an environment of lawlessness and the abuse of human rights, inefficiency, and the hobbling of socio-economic development.

When Lesotho suffers a political crisis, SADC is compelled to come to the aid of one of its member states. While SADC has achieved some successes, notably on the more technical and procedural issues,⁸ its interventions have not brought about long-term peace and stability in the country. SADC's interventions include the appointment of the SADC Facilitator for Lesotho in 2014 and the establishment of the SADC Observer Mission in Lesotho (SOMILES). Its presence in Lesotho continues in the form of the Oversight Committee, which has been in the country since 2016, and the deployment of a SADC Standby Force following the 5 September 2017 assassination of the commander of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF). SADC's presence in Lesotho was intended to create and support an environment conducive to the implementation of national reforms. Yet, as pointed out by some analysts,⁹



the shortcoming of SADC's intervention in Lesotho has been its strategy of managing rather than resolving the conflict.

National reforms – which form part of the country's current context and which ITI hopes to positively impact – have been the subject of many SADC reports and communiqués since 2014. Some of the reforms included amendments to the LDF and Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) acts to address overlapping mandates; implementation of the 2013 Commonwealth Envoy's recommendations on coalition governments and reform of the civil service; analysis of the mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system and its implications for government stability; ensuring the independence of the judiciary; and relevant constitutional reforms.

The coalition government of 2017 picked up on the reform agenda and, with the support of SADC, convened a multi-stakeholder national dialogue plenary session in November 2018 to foster national consensus on the reform issues. A national consultative process ensued from there. Prior to the 3 June 2017 election, most of the 26 political parties that took part in the election signed 'The Reforms Pledge'. The pledge affirmed the commitment of parties across Lesotho's political spectrum, in and outside of Parliament, to prioritise reforms after the elections.

Although the reform agenda looks good on paper and its achievement will be key in bringing stability to the country, its implementation will be the real test. The process has been marred by various challenges, including continued instability in national governance arrangements, conflicting interests of national stakeholders, and the stalling of the roll-out process. According to the CCL's general secretary, 'political capture of the process, amongst other things, continues to be a major challenge, including the challenge of mediating the various interests in the reform agenda'. While SADC has done much to nudge the country towards this reform path as an external facilitator, the role of internal/local mediators must be recognised as essential, especially in sustaining peace and stability. Hence the important role of national institutions such as the Church.

Given that Lesotho is a largely Christian country, with more than 95% of its estimated population of 1.5 million people Christians, the Church is a powerful and credible institution that has and can continue to influence peace and stability outcomes. The Church, embodied by the CCL, is currently made up of seven of the most powerful denominations in the country. The CCL has historically helped the country out of crisis moments despite the externally driven mediation processes led by SADC. It continues to play an influential role in addressing the social, economic and political challenges that besiege the country, more so in its recent history.

The reforms¹⁰ are being implemented by the Lesotho government, with the National Reforms Authority (NRA) put in place in 2019 to manage, coordinate and lead the process. When ITI began to engage with the CCL,



The reform agenda looks good on paper, ... its implementation will be the real test

it was not as enthusiastic about the reforms as it could have been. This was despite its being recognised as a key stakeholder and part of the national dialogue structure. The HOCs told ITI that they felt side-lined in the process. They accused SADC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of taking over the peace process while ignoring local actors and treating it as a project rather than a multi-layered process.

ITI INTERVENTION IN LESOTHO

Paul van Hoff, a consultant working on an evaluation project in Lesotho commissioned by the European Union (EU), facilitated ITI's involvement with the CCL in early 2018. At that time, Lesotho was going through its third coalition government led by then prime minister Tom Thabane of the All-Basotho Congress (ABC). The coalition partners had signed an agreement to restore national unity, reconciliation, peace and stability. All three partners also committed to support the national reform process. The CCL's view at the time was that the new coalition government needed to be supported to ensure that it lasted its full five-year term. If successful, it was anticipated that this would set the precedent for how future coalition governments could function.

Some of ITI's directors have considerable experience in coalition management, having been involved in South Africa's Government of National Unity (GNU) from 1994–1999. ITI's intervention in Lesotho was at that point ad hoc, with no follow-up. The training in coalition management¹¹ was conducted with representatives of the four political parties in the current coalition government,¹² with the objective to equip them with the knowledge and skills to manage the coalition. However, with no follow-up, momentum was lost. One of ITI's directors, Patience Hwenha, said that on closer analysis it emerged that the instability that arose with the advent of coalitions in Lesotho was a symptom of underlying structural issues that needed to be addressed.

With the SADC-supported national reform process gaining ground and officially launched in November 2018, ITI renewed its interest in Lesotho and began to pursue possible ways of supporting this process. As pointed out by Patience, ITI was in favour of working within the ambit of the existing, organised and regionally supported national process of reforms, moving away from its previous ad hoc approach. Given that ITI mostly works on invitation, it considered re-engaging with the CCL. With the new focus on the reform agenda, Justice Moseneke, who had been appointed the SADC Facilitator for Lesotho and Special Envoy, standing in for Ramaphosa, became ITI's first port of call.

ITI attended the opening plenary session of the national dialogue in Maseru (26–28 November 2018) upon the invitation of Justice Moseneke and subsequently engaged with the CCL. Justice Moseneke felt that a



Some of ITI's directors have considerable experience ... having been involved in SA's GNU

local, credible organisation would be the ideal entry point for ITI to play a meaningful role in the national dialogue process.

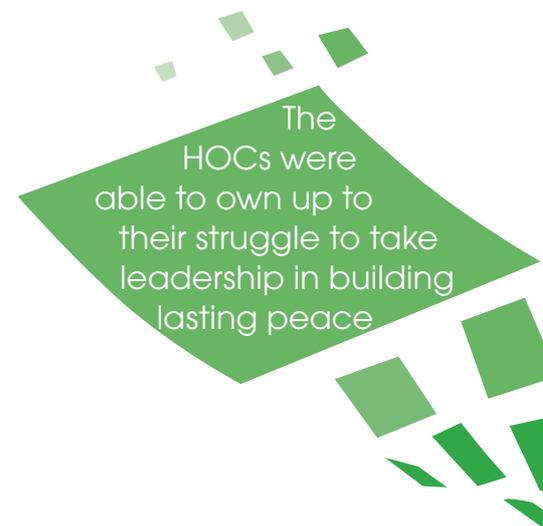
The CCL is an umbrella organisation for churches, established in August 1965. According to CCL General Secretary Masechaba Thorela, 'from its inception, CCL, through the HOCs, has been playing a pivotal role, as the foremost mediator for local and national conflicts in Lesotho'. The CCL has convening power and relies on its moral authority to resolve conflict at all levels of Basotho society. It has a long history of intervening in political crises in Lesotho, especially during elections. In instances where the international community has needed to become involved, the CCL has been the ideal local partner. Notably, SADC relied on the CCL in 2007 and 2011/12 to address the political impasses that had emerged.

The partnership between ITI and the CCL was formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in July 2019, to run until April 2020. According to the MOU, ITI and the CCL would jointly promote and, where agreed, work together to support the national reform agenda in Lesotho. Furthermore, it became clear that the CCL's capacity had to be strengthened to enable it to effectively execute its mandate. This capacity had been eroded over the years, and while the Church still enjoyed respect and convening power among all stakeholders, its mediation skills – particularly dialogue facilitation – had waned. Organisationally, the CCL had been unable to mobilise sufficient resources to meet the challenges in the country.

Following the signing of the MOU, the HOCs were invited on another visit to South Africa in August 2019, to learn about the role that the Church had played in South Africa's peace process. In this encounter the HOCs were able to own up to their struggle to take leadership in building lasting peace in Lesotho. In addition, ITI held further engagements with the HOCs for advisory support and to establish specific areas of support around the national reform agenda.

What ultimately emerged from the CCL was its limited capacity to take on the national reform agenda in earnest. This thus became the major focus of ITI's intervention in the first year, with the vision still being to support the national reform agenda. One of ITI's guiding principles is ownership of the national peace by local stakeholders. In living up to that principle, ITI believed that strengthening the capacity of the CCL as a local institution in Lesotho would engender local ownership of the peace process and develop the institutional capacity of local organisations to sustain peace and stability in the country. This could not rest solely with external mediators such as SADC, or ITI itself.

To further this aim, various engagements were subsequently held with the HOCs from September 2019 to February 2020. The capacity support involved:



- Advisory support to the Church on its role in national peace issues, including inter- and intra-party conflicts that threatened national stability³
- Formalised strategy sessions
- Exposure to members of the SACC to guide the HOCs in strategy development, and provide guidance and motivation through lessons from their own practical experience
- Training in mediation
- Dialogue facilitation

ITI was also invited by Democracy Works Foundation in Lesotho to form part of the panel advising political parties on parliamentary reforms.



The Heads of Churches from the Christian Council of Lesotho on a learning visit to South Africa hosted by ITI.



ITI provided guidance and motivation through lessons from its own practical experience

LESSONS LEARNT

Sharing lessons from the South African experience of a peaceful transition is the hallmark of ITI's interventions in peacebuilding in the region and globally. The transition process was guided by the three core principles of inclusivity, trust and ownership. These principles have been tested in various contexts and are relevant to many countries going through conflict and searching for peaceful resolutions. There is increasing acknowledgement that inclusivity is fundamental to lasting peace. Trust building has proven to be a key ingredient in enabling the participation of all stakeholders in a conflict. The principle of national ownership for sustainable peace in transitional and post-conflict contexts has also been endorsed as being central to peacebuilding.

The case of Lesotho, though still evolving, has underlined the importance of national ownership of any peace process and on trust building among the various actors involved. It has also highlighted the nuances and challenges of inclusivity in a peace process that is marred by competing interests and mistrust.

OWNERSHIP

It is widely accepted that peacebuilding efforts only become successful when local society has the will and capacity to build and maintain durable peace. Since conflicts take place within specific contexts, it is within these contexts that peacebuilding measures should be rooted. National ownership is embodied by local or insider mediators who are trusted and respected, and bring with them 'a higher legitimacy, cultural closeness and an ability to convene all relevant stakeholders'.¹⁴ The primacy of local actors and their inherent and proven ability to make meaningful impact in a number of ways – including facilitating dialogue and breaking political deadlocks – more often than not can supersede that of external mediators.

The Church in Lesotho is one such local actor that historically has played this role in the country. Based on the South African experience, ITI's engagement in Lesotho recognised the need to work from this premise. Guided by the perceived aversion of the Basotho to external influence, ITI took the approach that external efforts should at best empower local actors in a manner that will enable these actors to meaningfully address the challenges being faced. These actors should be encouraged to increasingly and effectively take control of their own destiny.

The far-ranging reforms offer Lesotho a turning point to find a firmer footing in its quest for lasting stability. This is owing to the fact that the reforms are targeted at addressing structural deficiencies in the country, including constitutional issues. Some of these structural challenges include Lesotho's



External efforts should empower local actors to enable them to address challenges being faced

economic dependency on South Africa; political instability and cycles of electoral violence; and politicisation of the security forces and the ultimate polarisation of the nation.

While external mediators such as SADC have tried to help Lesotho to restore stability, it ultimately rests with local stakeholders to make and sustain the peace, hence the need for national ownership of the process. Negative sentiments have prevailed in some quarters of Basotho society over what they term the 'SADC project'. This has, according to Liphapang Monesa of the CCL, tended to undermine the serious nature of the issues Lesotho faces. As a result, a sense of local ownership is not as deeply embedded within the country as it should be. The will and capacity of local actors to embrace local ownership thus remains a challenge, according to ITI's Patience Hwenha.

The CCL, a trusted local institution that had initially also expressed these negative sentiments of a SADC 'project', eventually began to embrace the need to embody local ownership through more active engagement in the process. It began leveraging its role and positive image and influence, and hence its ability to bring the national reform agenda to bear on the people of Lesotho. Its leadership, through the HOCs, has embraced the need to play a bigger role; one that can supersede that of SADC. The Church is at present considering pushing for a national approach akin to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This could help the nation to heal by confronting and addressing long-standing human rights abuses perpetrated by successive coalition governments and individual political parties.

Further to this has been the concern of the Church that the reform process is being captured by the political elite. Genuine national ownership of the peace process requires that it be fully embraced by the Basotho at large and not dictated by the political elite. The CCL, through its oversight role, has begun to promote a broader understanding of national ownership and hence credibility and acceptance of the reform agenda. This is especially crucial given that SADC's role ended in 2019, when it handed over the implementation of the reform agenda to the NRA. Local institutions such as the Church and other civic organisations still need support to build confidence in embracing the broader requirements entailed in the concept of local ownership.

TRUST BUILDING

Trust is recognised as a cornerstone of peace processes. Not only does trust confer institutions with lasting legitimacy but it also helps individuals and groups to remain committed to the long and often laborious process of building lasting peace. Yet building such trust among stakeholders involved in a peace process is exceedingly difficult. In the case of Lesotho, ITI has noted the trust deficit in the country, with mistrust running deep between and within institutions and society in general. This includes the mistrust with which local actors view external actors and mediators, including of the reform agenda process facilitated by SADC. While ITI's involvement in Lesotho is still evolving,



The Church is at present pushing for a approach akin to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

more work is needed to strengthen trust between the various stakeholders if the current peace process is to stand any chance of success. Here again the role of the Church has been recognised, given its moral authority and convening power. Its ability to mediate varying interests and build bridges across the many divides in the country will be key in building the trust needed to transcend the challenges in the country. Thus far ITI has worked with the HOCs to strengthen the level of trust among themselves, and between them and the CCL Secretariat.

INCLUSIVITY

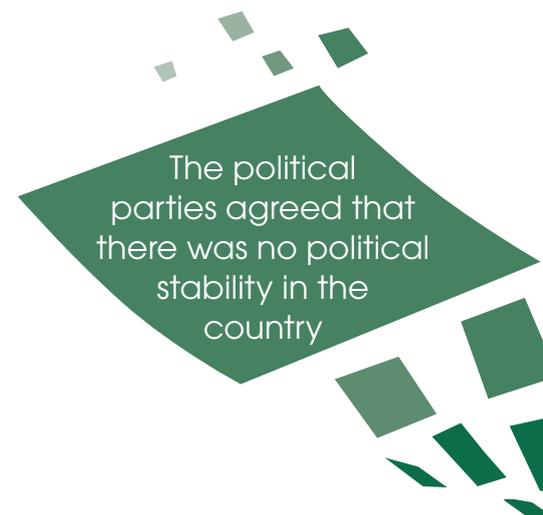
An inclusive peace process is a requirement in sustaining lasting peace. Lessons thus far from the Lesotho case indicate that although the SADC-facilitated reform process was centred around a national consultative process, much still needs to be done to ensure that the inclusivity principle carries through in the implementation of the reforms. The trust challenges cited above also present inclusivity challenges, with some institutions and segments of society adopting a wait-and-see approach, particularly now that the implementation of the reforms is fully under the NRA. A case in point is the CCL's experiences with key stakeholders to the reforms. The HOCs indicated that they had met with the National Dialogue Coordinating Committee (NDLC), security sector, judiciary and political parties in late 2019 and early 2020 as part of building momentum around the national reform process. It emerged that the dialogue process had not progressed as expected and there was a general fear of political parties' having captured the process.

The security sector agents were unhappy because they felt that they had been left out of the reform process, while the judiciary was equally dissatisfied with the process since they had not been consulted. The political parties agreed that there was no political stability in the country and took responsibility for having contributed to this. The NRA consists mostly of political actors (31 members), with only 19 members from other segments of society. It remains to be seen whether this will negatively impact the implementation process in terms of inclusivity.

The Church continues to engage with various stakeholders through its convening power to ensure the inclusivity of the reform process. In late 2020 it engaged with the NRA, media and judiciary to sustain their interest in the reforms. The nuances of inclusivity in the context of Lesotho should be keenly observed and the various stakeholders – including the Church – supported to ensure the inclusivity principle is upheld during implementation.

ITI'S GUIDING APPROACH AND STRATEGIES

As an organisation, ITI has a set of strategies, approaches or tools for addressing different conflict situations. The choice of approach is based on the unique attributes of the specific conflict context, as well as the stakeholders involved.



The political parties agreed that there was no political stability in the country

High-Level Access

As an organisation, ITI has a cordial relationship with the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). This relationship is enhanced by the political capital of the ITI directorate. Through this relationship ITI has access to high-level information on the conflict countries in which it seeks to intervene. With specific reference to Lesotho, ITI engaged with Justice Moseneke and his support team at DIRCO. On the advice of Justice Moseneke, ITI partnered with the CCL.

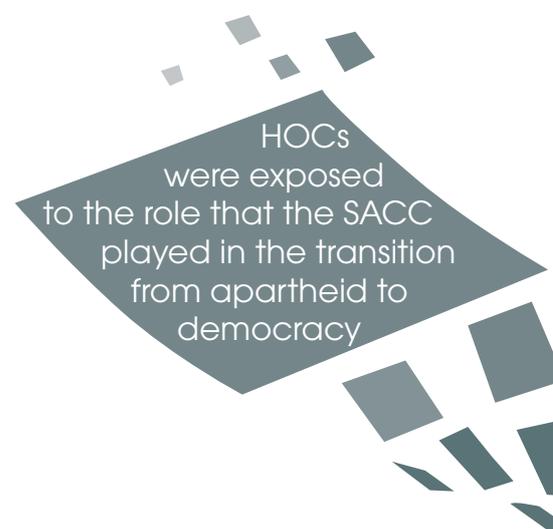
Direct access to the HOCs enabled ITI to enhance the church leaders' knowledge and skills, with the aim being to ultimately help them develop the necessary will and capacity to influence the national reform process in Lesotho. Through this engagement ITI could access and engage with political party representatives, facilitate a training workshop for party representatives and offer them advisory support in a consultation on parliamentary reforms. Engaging with decision makers and discussing issues at the highest level possible places ITI in a unique position to effect positive change in conflict situations. In Lesotho, continued support of the CCL will be key in ensuring the reform process proceeds on a firm footing.

Hosting the CCL Delegation

Hosting delegations in South Africa to learn from the South African transition experience is one of the strategies used by ITI in its peacebuilding work. The focus of learning for each delegation depends on the nature of the conflict and the key areas in which they need exposure to enable them to unlock a seemingly intractable impasse or stalemate. The CCL delegation, comprising six HOCs, the chairperson of the CCL Board of Directors and one staff member of the CCL Secretariat, was brought to South Africa in August 2019 on a four-day learning experience with a focus on strengthening dialogue facilitation and negotiation/mediation skills. This is critical for their role in the reform agenda.

The HOCs were exposed to the role that the SACC and civic organisations played in the country's transition from apartheid to democracy. Importantly, the learning visit also offered a reflective space for the HOCs. It made them realise how significant a role the Church could play in bridging divisive political differences and facilitating the formation of an inclusive and cohesive coalition government in Lesotho.

The CCL also reaffirmed its oversight role, with Archbishop Lerotholi boldly acknowledging that the buck stopped with it regarding any crisis that occurred in the country. The CCL has become the institution of last resort when all other national institutions and external intervention efforts have failed. During the interviews for this study, Bishop Daniel Rantle of the Wesleyan Methodist Church (and one of the HOCs) confirmed that they did occupy an influential position in Basotho society, a role not sanctioned



by law but rather buoyed by their moral authority in nation building and social development.

However, in their introspection, the HOCs admitted that their authority had waned over time, resulting in a limited capacity to deal with the country's deepening crisis. This realisation came about in an acknowledgement that conflicts still flared up despite their mediation efforts. A case in point is the intra-party conflicts in the ABC, where two factions continue to fight over the party leadership. The learning visit gave the CCL an opportunity to review these situations and conclude that it needed to re-assert its authority.

Regarding its involvement in the reform agenda, the CCL indicated that in the past it had a cordial working relationship with SADC built on cooperation and trust, adding that they had worked together to break the political impasse in the 2009 and 2011/12 elections. However, this relationship had since deteriorated to a level where cooperation and trust had eroded and where they felt that solutions were being 'dictated' to them by SADC without any meaningful engagement. The HOCs accused SADC and the UNDP of treating the search for peace in Lesotho as a 'project' rather than a process that needed to be led by and enjoy the full participation of internal stakeholders.

With the facilitator emphasizing the importance of both external and internal mediators working in complementarity, the HOCs decided to engage with the SADC-facilitated process. During the interview with the HOCs, the Archbishop confirmed that they had made some progress in mending their relationship with SADC after engaging with the SADC Special Envoy. This ultimately led to the HOCs' being asked by the SADC envoy team in April 2020 to intervene in asking Thabane to leave office in a dignified manner following allegations of his involvement in the murder of his former wife.

The CCL was also exposed to the role the Church had played in South Africa to avert a civil war and move the country towards a peaceful transition. Conditions in Lesotho – characterised by political dysfunction and polarisation, politicisation of the judiciary, a fragile coalition government and systemic corruption – were said to be ripe for intervention by the Church. Based on the lessons learnt from the South African experience, the CCL needed to ensure the following preconditions:

- Set the moral parameters for politics, based on the moral authority of the Church
- Establish interfaith unity, and leverage its popular support to mobilise citizens and civil society
- Work with other civic society leaders to agree on key issues and principles in terms of peace and stability in the country

The reflections by Roelf Meyer¹⁵ at the conclusion of the learning visit encouraged the CCL to reclaim its moral authority and rally the public



The reflections of Roelf Meyer encouraged the CCL to reclaim its moral authority and rally the public

behind it, stating that the Church does not need permission to intervene in national issues. He emphasized that the CCL could help to get politicians to reform. Roelf emphasized that if the Church garnered enough support from the public, it would be possible for the CCL to put pressure on the politicians since they relied on the same public that supported the Church.

Institutional Capacity Building

One of the principles by which ITI abides is that of empowering strategic local actors with relevant knowledge and skills to ensure effective implementation of processes. In this regard, ITI uses its high-level network to source highly competent resource persons with experience in the specific needs of each country context. This was the case for Lesotho, where a mix of technical experts, South African clergy and ITI directors were engaged. In this project, the major national issues identified were coalition management, national dialogue facilitation, mediation and negotiation.

The South African transition to democracy had highlighted the importance of negotiation, mediation and dialogue facilitation skills and expertise. Thus, ITI's focus on these skills in Lesotho was informed by the South African experience. From an institutional perspective, the CCL was the most strategic organisation with national legitimacy based on its moral authority and convening powers. With Lesotho being a mostly Christian country, this approach was seen as appropriate.

Strategic Planning for the CCL

The need for strategic planning for the CCL was based on the continued and deepening instability in Lesotho, in which the role played by the Church was becoming obsolete. The CCL urgently needed to be strategically positioned to deal with the growing demands for peace and stability, particularly within the frame of the national reform agenda.

The strategic planning was conducted in two phases. The first phase was a workshop with six HOCs, two members of the CCL Secretariat and a United Nations representative, conducted from 9–11 December 2019. The workshop was facilitated by ITI and split into two sessions. The first session focused on strategic issues while the second focused on team building. Prior to engaging on the strategic issues, the CCL reviewed the actions taken and progress made since engaging with ITI in July 2019. On strategic issues, the workshop revealed several gaps in the overall CCL institutional strategy, structure, roles and functions.

The second phase of the strategic planning session comprised the HOCs, CCL Board and Secretariat. Following on from the structural deficiencies noted in the first phase, the second phase paid particular attention to hierarchical and lateral relations, as well as the roles of the key organisational structures of the CCL. This was aimed at ensuring that the organisation was fit for purpose.



The need for strategic planning for the CCL was based on the continued instability in Lesotho

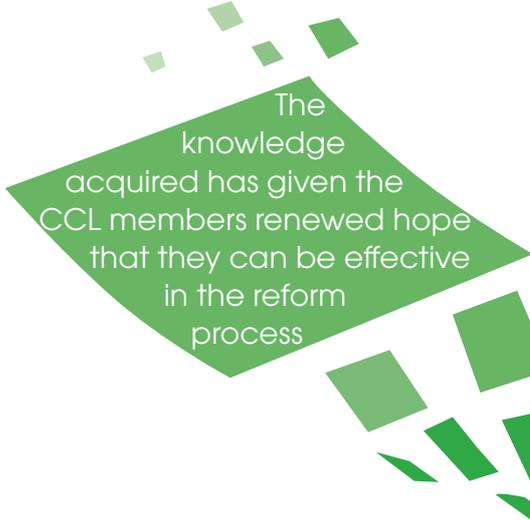
As is characteristic in strategic planning, the CCL revisited its vision, mission and values and reasserted that as an ecumenical Christian fellowship whose major strength was its prophetic voice, its main role was to promote peace in Lesotho. The issue of structural deficiencies was noted as a key weakness, including lack of depth of content in mediation and dialogue facilitation skills and a reactive approach to mediation. A reliance on external funding and dwindling funding opportunities were also threatening the operations of the CCL.

The strategic planning session enabled the CCL to conduct self-introspection and develop a five-year strategic plan that emphasised ensuring peace and stability in the country by supporting the national reform process. There was a general acknowledgement that, overall, the strategic planning process was one of the key steps in improving the CCL's performance. According to Caesar Molebatsi, an ITI consultant, the CCL needed further institutional strengthening so that it could work effectively in impacting the peace and stability challenges of the country.

Dialogue Facilitation Skills for the CCL

This training session was a continuation of ITI's efforts to provide capacity strengthening on dialogue facilitation to the CCL, to enable it to pursue a more structured approach as a key stakeholder in the national reform process. An important decision made at this training was for the HOCs to engage with the NRA to lend it their support. The UN and UNDP offered the CCL support in hosting the dialogue with the NRA.

The decisions made at this capacity-support training are evidence of the impact of ITI's intervention, which has begun to yield results. The CCL is slowly regaining confidence in its role as a local mediator. The knowledge that it has acquired and the advisory support, mediation and negotiation skills to which its members have been exposed have given them renewed hope that they can be more relevant and effective in the national reform process. The extent of the challenges in Lesotho requires continued support for the HOCs in terms of the requisite skills in dialogue facilitation and mediation.



The knowledge acquired has given the CCL members renewed hope that they can be effective in the reform process

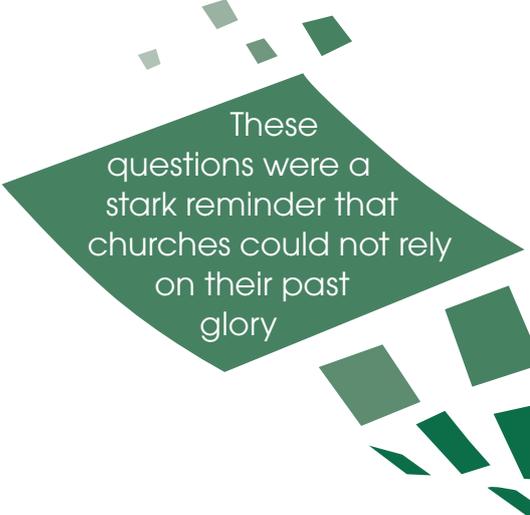
MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION

The first moment of transformation took place during the learning visit to South Africa (19–21 August 2019), when the role played by the SACC in the transition to democracy was explained. The HOCs could identify with this and were enthusiastic about having a better sense of their role and realising the enormous responsibility the Church carried through its moral authority.

Related to this, another moment of transformation for the HOCs was noted by Liphapang Monesa. He recollected how the facilitator, Caesar Molebatsi, raised pertinent questions about whether Basotho society still recognised the Church's moral authority, and whether the Church still had the legitimacy and capacity to carry out its mandate. These questions were a stark reminder that churches could not rely on their past glory but needed to renew this as dynamics in society changed. The need to regain the confidence of the public in order for their stakeholders to genuinely respect the Church and its recommendations was noted by the General Secretary of CCL as an important realisation.

In another instance, Archbishop Lerotholi said the distinction made between the role of internal and external mediators was a wake-up call. 'The realization of the significance of our role as internal mediators and how we should be working in complementing and not resenting or competing with external mediators, especially SADC, shed a new light to us and has since shaped the relations that emerged thereafter in a positive manner,' he noted.

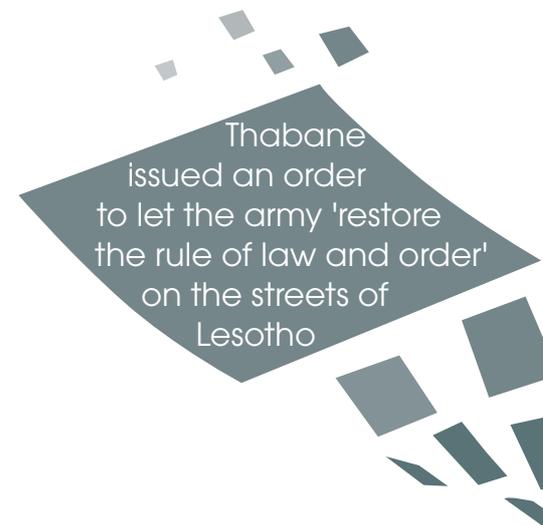
Another transformative moment cited by the HOCs came about during the interrogation of the CCL organogram. There was a sudden realisation by the CCL leadership that, after having existed for many years, there was a serious disjuncture between the HOCs and the Executive. These two entities seemed to be operating as two centres of power loosely connected by the Secretariat. These structural deficiencies prompted the CCL to make a commitment to address them so the organisation could work as a coherent unit.



These questions were a stark reminder that churches could not rely on their past glory

At the time of writing, the national reform process was still underway in Lesotho. The capacity-strengthening support provided to the CCL by ITI is likely to show its full impact in the next year or two as it applies the knowledge and skills acquired through the various trainings and advisory meetings. However, there were some immediate actions that the CCL was able to take as a result of these interventions.

- The CCL developed a five-year strategic plan to guide its activities and mediation interventions with stakeholders. The Church thus was able to create a roadmap on how to engage on the national reform process.
- The CCL held dialogue sessions with key national stakeholders – notably the judiciary, security sector, political parties and the coordinating committee of the national reforms. These dialogue sessions enabled the CCL to establish the concerns of these sectors and convene a meeting with the government to address these in informing how the national reform process should proceed.
- When Thabane issued an order to the military commander on 18 April 2020 to let the army 'restore the rule of law and order' on the streets of Lesotho, the HOCs intervened. This resulted in the commander's refusing to follow through on the command.

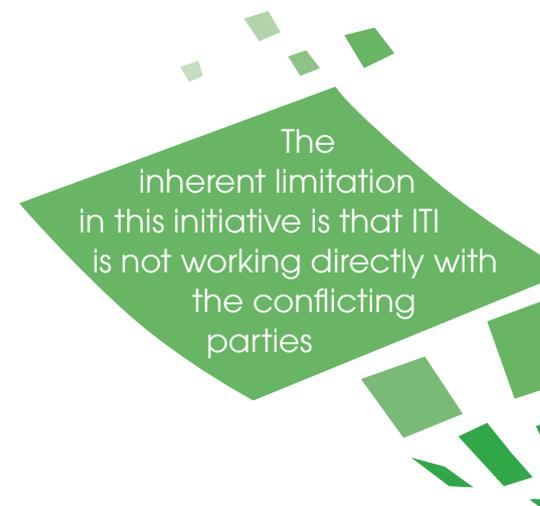


LIMITATIONS

In its peacebuilding work, ITI is mindful of the associated risks in each context in order to ensure that interventions are effective.

In Lesotho, ITI strategically partnered with the CCL based on the awareness that the Basotho are generally sceptical of external interventions. Therefore, partnering with the CCL, a trusted local mediator, was incisive. This helped ITI to realise the need for more empowering relationships to be built between local and external actors to enable local-level peacebuilding capacities to be strengthened. The continued capacity deficit within the CCL remains a major challenge and will need more attention, given the complexity of conflict dynamics within the country.

The inherent limitation in this initiative is that ITI is not working directly with the conflicting parties in the coalition government. Direct engagement with the political parties at various levels could yield the desired results in the short to medium term. However, the hope is that building the capacity of the CCL can yield positive ripple effects across the various national institutions, including shaping the political landscape to create conditions for lasting peace and stability in Lesotho.

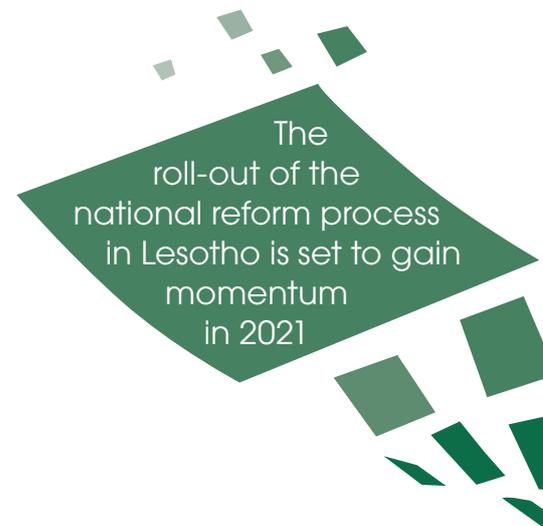


CONCLUSION

The case study discusses the lessons learnt from ITI's intervention in the national reform process in Lesotho. The context was characterised by political instability associated with poor management of the coalition government and the deterioration of democratic practices.

The CCL was experiencing diminishing capacity and confidence in the process to exercise its oversight role as the moral authority in the country. ITI's intervention was focused on supporting the national reform process by building the capacity of the CCL to play its role more effectively in getting all stakeholders to work together in addressing common challenges. Through various activities, including training sessions, learning visits and strategic planning, ITI helped the CCL to regain its confidence and use its convening powers to proactively participate in the national reform process.

The case study demonstrated the leverage that comes from working with a credible local partner. It also showed the importance of building the capacity of local institutions to ensure sustainable peace and political stability, through the principles of ownership, inclusivity and trust. The roll-out of the national reform process in Lesotho is set to gain momentum in 2021 after having stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impasse over the resignation of Thabane. As a result, the CCL needs more capacity support. The Church needs to reassert its oversight role in the peace process. It is important that the content of its intervention and skills base in mediation and dialogue facilitation is institutionalised, thereby ensuring that it is not overlooked as a key local player as the peace process continues to unravel in Lesotho.



PROJECT TIMELINE

2018

26-27 FEBRUARY

Pretoria, South Africa

ITI-facilitated training on coalition management for the Lesotho coalition government, which includes the All Basotho Congress (ABC), the Alliance of Democrats (AD), the Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL).

NOVEMBER

Pretoria, South Africa and Lesotho

ITI meeting with Justice Moseneke. ITI officially invited to participate in plenary of the Lesotho national dialogue and reform process. Planning meeting to get insights into how ITI can be of value to the dialogue and reform process in Lesotho.

2019

JANUARY

Pretoria, South Africa and Lesotho

Justice Moseneke and DIRCO team meeting on Lesotho. Strategic direction given on how ITI can intervene in Lesotho reform process.

22-24 JULY

Lesotho

Political Parties Sectoral Consultations Programme.

9-11 DECEMBER

Lesotho

Strategic planning session with CCL HOCs, Secretariat and UN representative.

FEBRUARY

Lesotho

Meeting held to discuss possibility of a partnership. MoU for ITI to offer capacity support to CCL and other key stakeholders on national reform process. Visit to Lesotho to meet with Christian Council of Lesotho leadership.

19-21 AUGUST

Pretoria

Dialogue Facilitation and Negotiation/ Mediation Skills Capacity Strengthening Workshop for CCL HOCs.

2020

4-5 FEBRUARY

Lesotho

Strategic Planning with all CCL structures, including the Board.

4 MARCH

Lesotho

Dialogue facilitation skills for the CCL

MARCH-APRIL

Two online advisory meetings with HOCs.

- 1 Justice Moseneke is a former justice of the South African Constitutional Court and former deputy chief justice of South Africa.
- 2 One of the directors at ITI.
- 3 Head of the CCL Secretariat, interviewed 8 October 2020.
- 4 Project Manager in the CCL Secretariat, interviewed 7 October 2020.
- 5 Head of the CCL, interviewed 29 October 2020.
- 6 ITI Consultant, interviewed 19 October 2020.
- 7 Prior to the crisis with coalition government, which started in 2012, Lesotho experienced political disturbances and internal conflicts in 1974, 1986, 1991, 1994, 1998 and 2007.
- 8 For example, compelling a snap election in 2015 and negotiating the safe return of political exiles, including Tom Thabane, from South Africa.
- 9 See Vhumbunu, C.H. (2015). "Appraising the Efficacy of SADC in Resolving the 2014 Lesotho Conflict". Conflict Trends Issue 3.
- 10 Reforms agreed upon by the third coalition government and that meant to be implemented: economic, public service, parliamentary, judiciary, security sector, media reforms constitutional review and amendment.
- 11 Issues addressed in the training included building an effective coalition government; dispute resolution and conflict management within coalitions; parliamentary collaboration among a coalition; and the exercise of leadership within a coalition.
- 12 These were the All Basotho Congress (ABC), the Alliance of Democrats (AD), the Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL).
- 13 At the time of ITI's intervention there was deep intra-party conflict within the then prime minister's party, the ABC.
- 14 UNDP Guidance Note (2014). "Supporting Insider Mediation: Strengthening Resilience to Conflict and Turbulence".
- 15 Roelf Meyer was previously Chairperson of the South African Defence Review (2011–2014), Minister of Defence in FW de Klerk's cabinet, Minister of Constitutional Affairs in Nelson Mandela's cabinet and Chief Government Negotiator in the peace talks, He is now a Director of the ITI.